

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1931

UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 2 SAIGON 0591/1

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TAGS: PINT VS VN

SUBJECT: A VIETNAMESE VIEW ON THE FUTURE OF SOUTH VIETNAM

1. TRANSMITTED IN PARAS 2 THROUGH 7 BELOW IS THE TEXT OF A MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION BETWEEN A MEMBER OF THE US CONGEN STAFF IN NHA TRANG AND SENATOR PHAM VAN DIEM OF DALAT. SENATOR DIEM IS A MEMBER OF THE SENATE FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEES AS WELL AS A VICE PRESIDENT OF THE ASIAN PARLIAMENTARIANS ASSOCIATION. HIS VIEWS ON THE FUTURE OF THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM PLACED IN THE PROPER HISTORICAL CONTEXT ARE THOUGHTFUL AND WELL PRESENTED. THEY SHOULD BE OF PARTICULAR INTEREST TO A WIDE VARIETY OF AMERICAN OFFICIALS CONCERNED WITH VIETNAM.

2. BEGIN TEXT: I ASKED HIM(I.E. SENATOR DIEM) WHAT EVENTUAL SCENARIO HE ENVISIONED FOR AN END TO THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN NORTH AND SOUTH. PREDICTABLY, HE RESPONDED, THAT IT DEPENDED UPON CONTINUATION OF SUBSTANTIAL AMERICAN SUPPORT. THAT, HE SAID, IS THE MOST CRUCIAL FACTOR. THE RESIGNATION OF PRESIDENT NIXON WAS A BLOW TO VIETNAMESE CONFIDENCE AND MORALE, HE SAID, BECAUSE PRESIDENT NIXON HAD DEMONSTRATED HIS COURAGE IN SUPPORT OF SOUTH VIETNAMESE AND HIS POWER WITH THE U.S. CONGRESS. THE NEW PRESIDENT IN WASHINGTON DOES NOT HAVE

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THAT STRENGTH AND IS FACED WITH AN OPPOSITION CONGRESS, HE OBSERVED.

"ONE OF OUR GREATEST MISTAKES", THE SENATOR SAID, "WAS NOT TO ESTABLISH AND MAINTAIN CONTINUOUS LIAISON BETWEEN VIETNAMESE AND AMERICAN PARLIAMENTARIANS, INDEPENDENT OF THE OFFICIAL EXCHANGES BETWEEN OUR TWO GOVERNMENTS AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS. AT THIS POINT THERE FOLLOWED A LONG DIGRESSION ABOUT THE ASIAN PARLIAMENTARIAN ASSOCIATION OF WHICH THE SENATOR IS VICE PRESIDENT. DURING THEIR MEETINGS, THERE ARE ALWAYS OPPORTUNITIES TO ENCOURAGE OUTSIDE SUPPORT TO THE GVN BY PRESENTING THE TRUE SITUATION OF THE COUNTRY, HE SAID. REVERTING TO THE IDEA OF LIAISON BETWEEN VN AND US SENATORS, HE SAID, "THERE ARE ISSUES, THERE ARE POLICIES ABOUT WHICH WE MIGHT COME CLOSER TO AGREEMENT WITH THE AMERICAN POLITICIANS THAN WITH THE PUBLIC POLICIES OF EITHER OR BOTH GOVERNMENTS. IT WOULD HAVE STRENGTHENED UNDERSTANDING AND MUTUAL CONFIDENCE IF WE HAD MAINTAINED AN UNOFFICIAL DIALOGUE BETWEEN PARLIAMENTARIANS IN SAIGON AND IN WASHINGTON."

3. COMPARING THE RELATIVE STRENGTH OF SOUTH VIETNAM VERSUS NORTH VIETNAM THE SENATOR BEGAN BY SAYING THAT, "THERE IS NOW MORE NEARLY AN EQUILIBRIUM BETWEEN NORTH AND SOUTH THAN THERE WAS AT THE TIME OF INDEPENDENCE IN 1954, " "THE NORTH," HE SAID, "BEGAN WITH AN AURA OF MILITARY INVINCIBILITY AS A RESULT OF THE VICTORY OVER THE JAPANESE OCCUPATION FORCES AND THE FRENCH COLONS. THE NORTH ALREADY HAD, IN THE STRUCTURE OF THE VIET MINH COMMAND, A STRONG GOVERNMENT THAT, IF IT WAS REPRESSIVE, WAS NONE-THE-LESS IN ABSOLUTE CONTROL AND COULD IMPLEMENT NATIONAL POLICIES. HOWEVER, THE NORTH LACKED NATURAL RESOURCES TO KEEP ITS SMALL INDUSTRIAL FACILITIES IN OPERATION. IT HAS NEVER, EVEN WITH THE MOST BRUTAL POLICIES OF THE GOVERNMENT, BEEN ABLE TO PRODUCE ENOUGH FOOD TO FEED ITS POPULATION. BUT THE MOST CRUCIAL FACTOR IS ITS PROXIMITY TO CHINA," HE SAID. "THERE THE NORTH VIETNAMESE, WITH A POPULATION OF SCARCELY 20 MILLION, SIT IN FEAR BEHIND AN INDEFENSIBLE FRONTIER FROM CHINA WITH 700 MILLIONS OF PEOPLE AND VAST RESOURCES."

4. FURTHERMORE, THE SENATOR SAID, THE LEADERS IN THE NORTH WERE OLD, THEY ARE PASSING ONE BY ONE. WITH VAST SUPPORT FROM THE COMMUNIST WORLD, THEY HAVE FAILED THROUGHOUT THIRTY YEARS OF CEASELESS MILITARY AND POLITICAL STRUGGLE TO HAVE THEIR WAY IN THE SOUTH. THEIR ECONOMY IS TOTALLY DEPENDENT UPON SUPPORT FROM OUTSIDE---MUCH MORE THAN OURS, HE SAID. THEY COULD NOT

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SURVIVE SIX MONTHS WITHOUT IT, HE SAID.

5. THE SOUTH BEGAN IN 1954 WITHOUT A GOVERNMENT, WITHOUT ARMED FORCES OF ANY KIND, WITHOUT A SINGLE VIETNAMESE UNIVERSITY (ONLY ONE FRENCH UNIVERSITY WITH ONLY FOREIGN PROFESSORS). HOWEVER, WE WERE FAR FROM CHINA, THE LAND IS NATURALLY RICH SO THERE HAS NEVER BEEN A SHORTAGE OF ESSENTIAL FOODSTUFFS, WE HAVE GREAT FORESTS, AND NOW WE BELIEVE WE HAVE GREAT PETROLEUM RESERVES.

OUR GOVERNMENT IS YOUNG AND NOW STRONG, OUR ARMY HAS PROVED ITS CAPABILITY EVEN WITHOUT THE PROMISED SUPPORT FROM THE USG AND WE STILL HAVE OUR LIBERTY. THE BALANCE BETWEEN NORTH AND SOUTH, HE CONTINUED, IS VERY PRECARIOUS. IT CAN BE UPSET BY OTHER COUNTRIES WHO SUPPORT, OR WHO FAIL TO SUPPORT, ONE SIDE OR THE OTHER. THE PRESENCE OF THE PRG IN SOUTH VIETNAM, IS A GREAT EMBARRASSMENT, AND CONTINUES TO BE A COVER FOR NVA INVADERS BUT, WITH A CONTINUATION OF REASONABLE SUPPORT FROM AMERICA, WE WILL GAIN ON THE NORTH BECAUSE OUR STRENGTH IS GROWING WHILE THEIRS IS WANING.

6. "BEFORE 1954 --- YOU WERE HERE, YOU MUST REMEMBER --- MOST OF OUR PEOPLE WERE BAREFOOT, UNEDUCATED. NOW WE HAVE TWELVE UNIVERSITIES AND STILL THERE IS NOT PLACE FOR ALL THE QUALIFIED STUDENTS.

A GENERATION OR TWO HAVE BEEN EDUCATED, SOME ABROAD - MAINLY IN AMERICA --- AND THEY HAVE COME BACK TO WORK IN GOVERNMENT. BEFORE, WE HAD NO DIPLOMATIC TRADITIONS. NOW WE HAVE SOME VERY BRIGHT AND HIGHLY TRAINED YOUNG MEN IN THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, IN THE MINISTRIES OF ECONOMICS AND AGRICULTURE. OUR AGRICULTURE HAS BEEN PUT ON A MORE SCIENTIFIC BASIS AND IS PRODUCING MORE THAN BEFORE, THOUGH THERE ARE STILL POTENTIALS WE HAVE NOT REACHED. ALL THIS HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED DURING THE WAR YEARS. IT IS NOT ONLY WITH IDEAS AND GUNS THAT WE FIGHT THE NORTH. WE HAVE IMPROVED THE QUALITY OF OUR YOUTH AND THE STANDARD OF LIVING OF OUR PEOPLE AND THE NEW GENERATIONS WE ARE FORMING NOW ARE VERY MUCH MORE CAPABLE THAN MINE WAS AT THE MOMENT OF INDEPENDENCE." THE SENATOR DECLARED.

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FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1932

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7. "IN FIVE TO TEN YEARS, PROVIDED ESSENTIAL SUPPORT CONTIUES, THE EQUILIBRIUM BETWEEN NORTH AND SOUTH WILL SHIFT HEAVILY IN FAVOR OF SOUTH VIETNAM. AS THIS HAPPENS, OPPORTUNITIES FOR NEGOTIATION ON A REALISTIC BASIS WILL OCCUR" HE SAID.

"THERE IS MUCH CRITICISM OF THE GVN IN THE UNITED STATES BECAUSE IT IS NOT A TRUE DEMOCRACY AND IT IS NOT UNDERSTOOD IN AMERICA THAT THE WHOLE CONCEPT OF DEMOCRACY IS NEW TO US AND, ONE MUST FRANKLY STATE, IT IS CONTRARY TO MUCH OF OUR SOCIAL TRADITIONS, "HE EXPLAINED. "THE VIETNAMESE TRADITION IS THAT WITH GREAT RESPONSIBILITY GO CERTAIN RIGHTS, CERTAIN PREROGATIVES. THE VN PEOPLE EXPECT THE GOVERNMENT TO BE STRONG, TO TAKE INITIATIVES, TO ESTABLISH SOCIAL DISCIPLINE, TO IMPOSE ORDER. THEY WOULD CONSIDER A GOVERNMENT WEAK THAT DID NOT DO THESE THINGS THAT ARE SO OFTEN CRITICIZED IN THE US," HE SAID. "THESE TRADITIONAL ATTITUDES GO FAR BACK IN OUR HISTORY AND ARE ABSORBED BY CHILDREN WITHIN THE STRONG BONDS OF THE FAMILY. THEY ARE ROOTED IN THE HISTORY OF OUR CEASELESS STRUGGLE AGAINST THE CHINESE, AGAINST THE COLONIALS, AGAINST THE JAPANESE, AGAINST THE COMMUNISTS. THEY REPRESENT THE BASIC STRENGTH OF OUR SOCIETY," HE SAID WITH CONVICTION. "HOWEVER, THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE ARE VERY FLEXIBLE, QUICK TO ABSORB FOREIGN IDEAS WHEN THEY SEEM BETTER THAN OUR OWN. WE HAVE TAKEN THE BEST FROM THE CHINESE, UNCLASSIFIED

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THE BEST FROM THE FRENCH AND WE HAVE SURELY ABSORBED A GREAT DEAL OF ADMINISTRATIVE, TECHNICAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC IDEAS FROM THE AMERICANS. AS EDUCATION BECOMES MORE GENERAL AND SECURITY IMPROVES, WE WILL SEE A NEW SOCIAL SYSTEM EMERGING AND THEN, PERHAPS, TRUE DEMOCRACY CAN BECOME POSSIBLE," HE SAID. END TEXT.
MARTIN

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